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Walsh, William Thomas

Babies - not bullets!

New York

[1939]

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Babies — Not Bullets!

BY

WILLIAM THOMAS WALSH

308

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Box 527

FIVE CENTS

New York

THE PAULIST PRESS

401 West 59th Street

Anna. gift
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PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.
BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK, N. Y.

"Babies, Not Bullets!"

[In "The Catholic World" for August, 1939, appeared an article on birth control, with the striking title, "Babies, Not Bullets!" from the pen of the gifted and versatile William Thomas Walsh. Reading the article before its publication, I was so struck by its unusual merit that I was impelled to make some editorial comment upon it. That comment forms the first part of the present pamphlet.—JAMES M. GILLIS, C.S.P., Editor, *The Catholic World*.]

IT is probably impossible to convince the advocates of race suicide of the error of their way. Logic cannot touch them. Statistics make no impression upon them. Wit is wasted on them. They don't give a hang for history or experience. Warnings not to tamper with nature don't frighten them. They scoff at appeals to religion and the supernatural motive. They call themselves patriotic—pro-American, pro-British, pro-French, pro-Whatever they happen to be, but they see nothing treacherous in their purpose to decimate the population of their "beloved country." They may have heard of von Moltke's *bon mot* to Bismarck, "We needn't kill the French; they are killing themselves," but they take no hint

Worse Than Any 'Ism

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"O. K. by us," for the birth-controllers are largely pro-Soviet—Communitic if not Communist. Nor can Lothrop Stoddard with his theory of "The Rising Tide of Color" frighten them. What does it matter to them if the Yellow Man or the Black Man inherits an earth vacated by the Whites? Even the terrible curse of the Gentlest of Men, "better a millstone around the neck" uttered against those who demoralize the young does not register with them. They think more of Margaret Sanger than of Jesus Christ.

Bernard Shaw referred to contraception as "reciprocal masturbation," and Theodore Roosevelt coined the phrase "Race Suicide," but not even such vigorous epithets can disturb them. With nice-nasty hypocrisy they call Onanism "Birth Control." In a word they are beyond reason, religion and common decency. They have reached the nethermost depths of degeneracy in which good is their evil and evil their good. They are beyond redemption—reprobate.

However, if there be still some resolutely charitable persons who would like to believe that the Sangerites are more ignorant than vicious, I recommend to them the article by William Thomas Walsh which follows this brief introduction. "Plans for defense," he says, "for economic reform, for social security, panaceas of one sort or another for saving democracy or saving Western civilization; all these, as matters now stand, are futile and unnecessary. As futile and unnecessary as if a man on his way to end it all by jumping off the George Washington Bridge were to stop to telephone an order for his meals next week, or if he were to rent a house, to buy a car, to ask a woman to marry him. He won't need a house, a car, or a wife if he jumps off the bridge."

Not since G. K. C.'s pseudo solemn solution of the problem "Only four hats for five heads, so cut off one head," has there been a wittier one-sentence indictment of the stupidity of the birth-controllers.

I have mentioned von Moltke and Bismarck. But "liberals" who think themselves living in The World of Tomorrow

have only disdain for those who were stupid enough to live—and to die—in the world of yesterday. So let's have something as nearly as possible up to date. On July 8th of this year Premier Daladier's government was reported to be "putting finishing touches on a campaign for more babies." It makes me think of two men who preceded Daladier, one by

Augustus Caesar and Daladier

almost 2,000 years, the other by 300. Augustus Caesar, who reigned in Rome from 27 B. C. to 14 A. D., tried to do precisely what Daladier is now trying to do. He didn't succeed. Rome was rotten and decay inevitable. Rome could have conquered the northern barbarians, one tribe after another, or all together if the Romans of the days of Augustus had been as virile as the Romans of the time of the Tarquins. But the barbarians, children of Nature, observed the laws of Nature; they hadn't learned the technique of degeneracy. The outcome of the conflict between savages and sophisticates is always predetermined.

The second name that leaped to my mind is that of the man whom I quote in these columns almost every month, Axel Oxenstiern. I don't know a great deal about him—Swedish diplomat, chancellor, member of the Council of Regents for Gustavus Adolphus, virtual ruler of the realm during the absences of the king in the Thirty Years' War—and all that. But what first attracted me to this seventeenth-century Scandinavian was not his diplomatic career but his famous apothegm, "See, my son, with how little wisdom this great world is governed." There doesn't seem wisdom enough in Downing Street, the Quai d'Orsay, Berchtesgaden and the Kremlin, pooling it all, to prevent a war that may be the last galvanic kick of the dying western world. Also, and worse, there seems to be not enough wisdom in the noddles of presidents, premiers, *duces*, *fuehrers*, diplomats, dictators, democrats (if any remain) to know how to deal with an evil more subversive than all the 'isms about which so great a

pother is made nowadays. Here in America too many loud-mouthed interventionists are telling us that democracy must perish unless Nazism or Fascism or Communism be put out of the way. But a healthy democracy has nothing to fear from any form of dictatorship, while an unhealthy democracy needs no dictatorship to destroy it. Too true to need saying, but

Again "How Little Wisdom"

is anybody in Congress saying it? How many Congressmen or Senators are crying out against the moral decay of the nation, manifest in such symptoms as multitudinous divorces and the all-but-universal practice of contraception?

Our President easily and fluently damns this and that economic, political, financial bugaboo; but in how many fire-side chats has he told his worshipful listeners that "economic royalists" can do them no harm if they live their home and family life according to the laws of nature? It is not within his province? A civil official must not trespass upon the field of the moralist? Quite the contrary: a civil official who ignores or slights the moral element in political or industrial or financial life is no statesman. Theodore Roosevelt may or may not always have measured up to the stature of statesmanship, but he was not afraid to tell his fellow citizens that though no one else could ruin us, we could ruin ourselves. Why is Franklin D. mute about the one national danger that is to all others as cancer to a flea-bite? If not Franklin, why not Eleanor? She goes to more places and sees more people than even the incessantly peripatetic James A. Farley. Her newspaper column is read by more women—so they tell us—than any other syndicated article. She is volubly articulate. Why couldn't she start a crusade with pen and tongue to halt a scourge more devastating than tuberculosis, carcinoma and poliomyelitis combined? The suggestion is ludicrous? She is on the other side? As a liberal she couldn't ally herself with conservatives? But wouldn't it be wonderful to find a "liberal" liberal enough to be now on one side and now on

another, according to the merits of the case? I for one would like to see Mrs. Roosevelt's column used for some more important purpose than "I-says-to-her-and-she-says-to-me" twaddle, or "I took a plane to Pittsburgh and spent an hour with my dear friend Mrs. D. whose gardens are so beautiful."

I notice that two of her fellow columnists in the *New York World-Telegram* predict that her references to matters of national and international importance will probably become more frequent. Heywood Broun would approve and Westbrook Pegler disapprove of an incursion by the President's wife into politics. A third opinion might be that if she does go in for journalism in a serious way, she might use her pen and her prestige to promote social morality. However, I admit that discriminating persons in general hope that she will stick to the twaddle because she is almost certain to be on the "ultra-advanced" side of social and moral questions. Ten to one she is for birth control.

In France, it seems, they are waking up to a realization of the danger of depopulation. Too late. And they are dealing with it the wrong way, as politicians always do. They have formed a French Federation of Large Families. They are holding a French Natality Congress. A ministerial committee has been created to work out a "code of defense" for the French family; the government is offering bonuses to parents of large families, providing non-interest-bearing loans cancelled when the debtor has four children, giving reduced railroad fares to large families, and so on and so on. All the

Campaign for Babies!

usual patches, stopgaps, thumb-in-the-hole-of-the-dike technique that politicians think of. All wrong, all foolish, all futile. It won't work. It never did. The Roman emperors couldn't cure unnatural vice with bread and circuses, bonuses and dispensations. How can Daladier hope to succeed where Caesar Augustus failed? When the Empire went to smash, the Romans blamed the Christians. In fact they kept on

blaming the Christians from St. Peter's day to Tertullian's, and from Tertullian's to St. Augustine's. There must always be a scapegoat, and the scapegoat is always innocent of the crime for which he is put to death. The Romans, committing suicide, with their dying breath blamed the only people in the Empire who were living decently, the Christians, and with Christians the barbarians who, though ignorant and savage, were neither so ignorant nor so savage as to do away with themselves. The Goths, Huns, Vandals, uncouth, uncultured, illiterate, left that folly to the wise, the enlightened, the advanced, the sophisticated. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same phenomenon recurs today. Aristocrats, intelligentsia, literati, college graduates; liberals, radicals, "forward-lookers" despise the poor, the simple, the God-fearing, God-loving common folk who have the sense and the decency to live naturally.

Meanwhile, in France or England, or America there is no one, except those whom Bertrand Russell calls "tyrants in long-black gowns," to rise and tell the people that the chief of evils is race-suicide and that only religion and the supernatural can cure it. No one except an occasional paterfamilias like our friend William Thomas Walsh who writes "Babies, Not Bullets!"

* * *

Babies, Not Bullets!

By WILLIAM THOMAS WALSH

Sometimes I am tempted to wonder if it would not be an excellent thing if all newspapers and magazines were destroyed, all lecturers silenced (with a few exceptions, of course); I am tempted to cry out, with the author of *The Imitation*, "Let all teachers hold their peace." For of all the words which belabor a weary world from day to day, millions are expended on plans for the betterment of human affairs,

plans for defense, for economic reform, for social security, panaceas of one sort or another for saving democracy or saving Western civilization; and all these, as matters now stand, are futile and unnecessary. As futile and unnecessary as if a man on his way to end it all by jumping off the George Washington Bridge were to stop to telephone an order for his meals next week, or if he were to rent a house, to buy a car, to ask a woman to marry him. He won't need a house, a car, or a wife if he jumps off the bridge. Tomorrow he will need only a grave; he could even get along without that.

Populations Becoming Stationary

The Western World may not be dead tomorrow, but if the present decline in the birth rate continues, and it is difficult to see at this moment why it should not go on for some time, it will be dead within a few decades. In Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Belgium, the natural increase in the population is not over one-quarter that of twenty-five years ago. At the present rate, England's population will be stationary in a very few years. In Germany, with a population of more than 60,000,000, the surplus of births over deaths decreased from 416,600 in 1930 to 305,525 the following year; and in Berlin in 1931, the deaths exceeded births by 10,718. The falling birth rate of France has been notorious for decades, and, but for the intervention of the United States, would probably have been a principal cause of her defeat in the World War. In 1835 the average French family raised four children, in 1896 three; today a small fraction over two. The population of France has become stationary.

In the non-Catholic countries the decrease in the birth rate has been more rapid than in the Catholic countries, for obvious reasons; but even in countries with large Catholic populations such as Austria and Switzerland, the natural increase in the birth rate has fallen 50 per cent in a quarter of a century. In the more fervently Catholic countries, however—Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Poland—there occurred

for some reason a greater natural increase after 1928 than in the first years of the century. Poland with a population of 31,000,000 had 526,000 more births than deaths in 1930, when the birth rate was 32.8.

What of the United States? The situation is notorious. Our population has already begun to decline. According to Dr. Frederick Osborn of the American Museum of Natural History, the present rate of reproduction in this country is only 95 per cent of the rate required merely to replace the present population. Bear in mind, too, that a falling birth rate is likely to accelerate in its rate of decrease. In a very few years there will be a preponderance of old people and a shortage of the young. There will be less need for schools, and those enlightened teachers who feel that they are performing a social service in advocating birth control may find themselves with a very urgent unemployment problem on their hands. Here in the last and richest corner of the teeming earth, where a future population of unlimited size, practically speaking, could be sustained—we also, are committing race suicide year after year. There is no doubt, and on this all the experts of insurance companies and other agencies are agreed, that the cause of the almost universal decline in the West has been the widespread and deliberate practice of so-called birth control.¹

Vain Promises

Mrs. Sanger and other apostles of biological emancipation used to promise that one result of the employment of contraceptives would be the elimination in large measure of abortions. Apparently, this has not occurred. Recent investigations in New York City have disclosed the existence of a criminal ring of physicians who, it was estimated, have been performing 100,000 abortions a year in Brooklyn alone. Consider the probable extent of this evil in all the other cities

¹ Since this article was written, the United States Census Bureau announced a slight recent upturn in the birth rate of this country. It is not yet clear what has caused this change, or what its significance may be.

of the United States, and the holocaust of murdered infants to the Moloch of modern pseudo-science seems an intolerable stench, crying to heaven for some swift and terrible vengeance. Yet this is only part of the nasty picture. The corner drugstore has become an agency for the distribution not only of very questionable and sometimes filthy books, but of contraceptives deftly advertised by stacks of little blue books on the counter, little blue books inscribed with the legend, "Science Says," or "Dr. So-and-So Gives Advice to Women," thus making a subtle appeal to the prevalent superstition of progress, as though birth control were new, scientific, and modern, and the bearing of children a relic of the medieval past.

Just before the World War there were 333 eager young men in a certain class graduating from Yale College. The survivors of that class are now in their late forties. Take them all in all, they were pretty good specimens of manhood, most of them able-bodied, well nourished, of more perhaps than average intelligence—surely the very ones who, on the alleged premises of the birth controllers themselves, should have assumed a major part of begetting and rearing the next generation. What have these men contributed to the stream of human life on which the greatness and indeed the existence of America must depend?

I have the statistics of this class before me as I write. Two hundred and fifty, or 80 per cent of the members have married during the intervening quarter of a century, five have been divorced, and one widowed. The married men and their wives constituted a group of 500 parents who have now for the most part reached the end of the age of child-bearing. Those 500 men and women have brought into the world just 502 children, of whom 486 survive. The average number of children per marriage is 1.81+. These 500 Americans (Yale graduates and their wives) have not quite replaced themselves in the world, and doubtless never will.

Forty-two of these married couples have had no children,

64 have had one child each, 81 have had two, 49 have had three, 19 have had four, 6 have had five; and the fathers of these last have to stand for a great deal of good natured raillery at reunions, as though they were Mormons, or Mohammedans, or rabbits. One family has seven living children; this is considered the tenth wonder of the world by other members of the class.

Is this class exceptional among American college graduates? No.

The Cause and Cure

The cause and the only possible cure for all this are evident enough. The birth controllers themselves know who their one and only formidable enemy is. Dr. J. J. Spengler of the University of Arizona, writing in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1932, made this statement: "That birth control is an integral part of our *mores* is patent in the fact that its practice is condemned, and with decreasing effectiveness, by only one well organized group, the Catholic Church." It does not seem to have occurred to this professor of economics that the obvious remedy for the enormous evil is the return of mankind to the Catholic Church. Instead he suggests payments by the State in reward for parenthood. He considers children "economic commodities" who must be cultivated if we are to avoid "biological decay" and "the collapse of Western civilization." He does not explain why selfish, materialistic and godless parents in the United States will do more for a State subsidy than they would for the promptings of natural affection in the United States, when subsidies in other countries—France, for instance—have failed to check the falling birth rate.

In Soviet Russia, on the other hand, the all-powerful State, at first indulgent toward birth control, reversed its policy when confronted with the need of man power for the coming ideological wars, with the result that the Slavs are now reproducing themselves. It seems that subsidies *can* be effective, when reinforced by fear of an irresistible remorseless despotism.

From all this it is evident that one of four things (there may be other possibilities, but these are obvious) must happen to our Western civilization:

(1) A degenerate West will be conquered and enslaved, if not annihilated, by men of the East who reproduce themselves: yellow men of Japan or China, or hordes of fanatical regimented Slavs of Soviet Russia, already reinforced by a network of intriguing agents all over the world.

(2) The East as well as the West will be corrupted by birth control, and both will sink to the dead level of slavery under one or more totalitarian dictatorships.

(3) Western Europe and America will accept the Catholic Faith with all that it implies—a vigorous normal birth rate, liberty for human personality, and the faith that achieves what seems impossible—and will quietly and inevitably dominate an East enervated by the doctrines of Mrs. Sanger.

(4) This rejuvenated Catholic Europe and America will approach a mighty struggle with a teeming and militaristic East which has rejected birth control, but which in other respects will be at many disadvantages, as the Mohammedans were, *ceteris paribus*, against Christian crusaders.

It must be admitted that these last two eventualities seem less probable at this moment than (1) and (2). Yet both (3) and (4) are possible; perhaps the third rather than the fourth, because, in spite of the present increase in Russia, there is a spiritual law which impels men and nations, once they have turned against God in one respect, to offend Him sooner or later in other matters, and in all; and it may be doubted whether any dictatorship can long restrain that tendency. The possibility of a great Christian triumph for the West still exists, and it depends in great measure upon the free will and fortitude of Catholics. Indeed it must be possible, it must be inevitable, if Catholics are but faithful to the teachings of the Church with particular reference to this so-called birth control. During the pontificate of Pope Pius XI the Catholic population of the world increased from 250,-

000,000 to 300,000,000, and the Catholic population of the United States increased from 17,000,000 to 20,000,000. It may be admitted that in this country there is an unfortunately large leakage, hardly balanced by the number of converts; but it has been offset hitherto by the higher birth rate among Catholics and by immigration. It must be admitted, also, that too many Catholics (though probably not as many as the birth control propagandists would like us to believe) have taken on the color of the surrounding pagan civilization in this business of birth control as well as in other matters. Nevertheless, this tendency can be checked by wise and firm measures before it is too late. And we have meanwhile some highly suggestive examples at hand of what happens when Catholics resist the seductions of cowardice, sensuality, and snobbery, and follow the course of man's true nature. We have the example of the French-Canadians and the example of the Irish.

Multiply and Possess the Land

The French-Canadians are not only increasing faster than their neighbors in Canada, but they have migrated to many of the northern States of the United States, and there, simply by virtue of natural increase, have begun to possess the land formerly occupied by dying stocks. There are so many French-Canadians in Maine that one of the indispensable requirements of a Catholic bishop there is a knowledge of French. Vermont and New Hampshire are gradually becoming French-Canadian communities. The French-Canadians already wield a powerful influence in Rhode Island.

The birth rate of the Irish in America has fallen, but not so much as that of other stocks; and the population of Ireland is increasing too slowly because of late marriages and emigration. But something very interesting is going on in England and Scotland. There the Irish have settled in most of the large industrial cities, and their birth rate has been so much higher than that of the English and Scotch, that

Protestant ministers in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and other places have bitterly complained that the newcomers are crowding out the natives and possessing the land. Thus the Irish are making a peaceful conquest of their old conquerors, and this without bullets or bayonets, but simply by following the law of God. How long this healthy tendency can withstand the pressure of pagan ideas, of economic necessity, or of corroding ease remains to be seen. But this much is certain:

If Catholics everywhere, Catholics in the United States, in England, in France, in South Germany, in Mexico, in South America—if these Catholics are intelligent enough and self-sacrificing enough to follow the advice of the Church, regardless of what it may cost (and this is no more than our ancestors did, often under worse conditions than ours), the West will become Catholic in the course of a few decades. This is an obvious mathematical certainty. It is a consummation worthy of the greatest effort on the part of all Catholics from the hierarchy down to the humblest layman. The hand that rocks the cradle will indeed rule the world, and those who are meek enough to obey Divine Wisdom must literally inherit the earth.²

Our task is great, and our enemies unresting and powerful. Yet there is courage to be found in the thought that all these difficulties, even this modern iniquity of "birth control," are as old as Christianity itself, and that we have no moral problem which did not exist for the Christians of the catacombs. To those who tell us we are behind the times in not accepting race suicide, we have only to point out that this sin, far from being new or modern, was part of the pagan corruption which the Catholic Church swept away as she advanced on her mission through the world, and that it has merely reappeared in a new guise as paganism makes its last desperate assault on the unconquerable Church.

² When this article (intended as a suggestion, not an exhaustive treatise) appeared in print, I realized for the first time that I had omitted mention of Italy—perhaps because it is so obvious that the Italians are one of the great healthy Catholic peoples that I took it for granted.—W. T. W.

A Voice from the Fourth Century

St. Augustine had occasion to denounce birth control in the fourth century. He condemned not only abortion and the exposure of infants to starve, but the use of what would now be called contraceptives. In one of his letters ("*De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia ad Valerium Comitem*") he speaks plainly of those who attempt to prevent offspring "either by wrong desire or evil appliance" and he adds:

"They who resort to these although called by the name of man and wife, are really not such; they retain no vestige of true matrimony but falsely take on the honorable designation as a cloak for their criminal conduct. Having also proceeded so far, they are betrayed into exposing their children who are born against their will. Those whom they begot with dislike they have a hatred of nourishing and retaining. This infliction of cruelty on their offspring so reluctantly begotten, unmasks the sin which they had practiced in darkness, and drags it clearly into the light of day. The open cruelty reproves the hidden sin. Sometimes, indeed, this lustful cruelty, or, if you please, cruel lust, resorts to such abnormal methods as the use of poisonous drugs to secure barrenness; or else if unsuccessful in this, to destroy the conceived seed by some means previous to birth, preferring that its offspring should rather perish than receive vitality, or if it was advancing to life within the womb, should be deprived of it even before birth. Well, if both parties alike are so corrupt, they are not husband and wife; and if such were their character from the beginning, they have not come together so much by holy wedlock as by abominable debauchery . . . either the woman is, so to speak, the husband's harlot; or the man his wife's adulterer."

Here we have plainly a condemnation not only of abortion but of the so-called modern crime of contraception. A Catholic of the fourth century, looking about him at the welter of debauchery, murder, and suicide, must have thought, but

for the virtue of hope, that the prospect of conquering such a world was pretty dismal. But the Church did conquer that world, because Catholic men and women put aside the seductions of pagan sensuality, and led hard, self-sacrificing, and heroic lives.

It can be so again. We have many advantages that the first Christians lacked. We have among other things the knowledge of what they overcame. The thing can be done. It cannot be done with any compliance on our part with the spirit of birth control. And for this reason I have no high opinion of the so-called "rhythm" theory, even though theologians tell us that it may be put into practice without sin. Its danger lies in the tendency of those who accept it to consider it a good in itself. If so, it is a negative sort of good. It is the minimum for the avoidance of sin. It substitutes a mean sort of prudence for a sublime trust in God. Surely it cannot be called a brave or heroic (that is to say, truly Catholic) attitude toward the problem involved; and in the light of the above considerations, it might be said to have the possibility of dangerous social consequences, evading, so far as it can without personal sin, the divine command, "Increase and multiply and fill the earth." Granting its efficacy, which is not at all certain, it may get a man into heaven at long last, so to speak, with his rump scorched, but it won't fill the earth with Catholics. And that is precisely what the world needs more than ever at this moment.

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